

Vancouver, Washington

Process Safety Assessment

March 21 – 24, 2005

Overview

The Vancouver Process Safety Assessment is the first in a series of site measurement processes for the Northwest Division. It is designed to examine in detail the intricate mix of workplace risks and how they contribute to the accident experience for the combined division.

Information and Findings

Management's goal for the safety process in the Vancouver area is to base it on principles outlined in the Shared Values initiative in which supervisors and craft employees work together to achieve a common vision of teamwork and empowerment. The goal is to create an atmosphere in which employees and supervisors have a high level of trust and credibility for one another. With a high level of trust and credibility in place, there should be no risk that cannot easily be worked through safety process in place.

The safety committee at Vancouver is well represented by management as well as all crafts with the exception of B&B. The committee is very active and viewed as a valuable piece of the safety process from many craft employees. It has strong support from local management. The committee focuses largely on unsafe physical plant conditions. The safety committee discusses the interpretation of work rules and how they apply to their assigned duties and then marathons the information for better craft understanding. Finally the safety committee demonstrates strong support for safety by having 24-48 hour safety feeds in order to recognize the safety conscious hard working employees of Vancouver.

Clear Safety Direction

There was clear direction in all crafts as to what an employee should do when they encounter an unsafe condition. The engineering department displayed a high level of trust in the SIRP or "pink sheet" process. Employees understood that if they encounter an unsafe condition they could either turn it into a supervisor or turn it in on a pink sheet. Employees had a varied level of trust in the SIRP process with mainly positive feedback.

TY&E cited fatigue as their primary concern for their safety and safety of the operation. It is interesting and promising that employees cite a human factor as their primary concern. It is not often the case that craft employees single out a human factor as the most critical risk in the environment. Fatigue is a critical issue and the idea that the craft employees are interested in identifying and problem solving for human factor risk demonstrates a willingness to acknowledge and consider all types of risk and safety concerns. There was no formal process to deal with human factor risk from the craft side at Vancouver. This group is fairly advanced in developing a solid safety process. It may

be a good time to explore an employee based human factor risk identification and analysis process.

Vancouver terminal is in the process of establishing the Shared Values initiative as the vision for how the terminal should operate. Shared Values was mentioned as a top priority by local management. Currently Shared Values is at different stages with different groups within Vancouver terminal. Many TY&E employees had never heard of Shared Values. Employees and supervisors who had heard of Shared Values agree that it is a worthy goal, but do not fully understand their role in supporting the goal. All management agreed that they wanted to support it. Front line supervisors and TY&E employees either do not understand what Shared Values is or they are unclear of their individual roles to support Shared Values.

Supervisors and employees are committed to creating an injury free workplace. The Shared Values initiative will help to provide a foundation for safety process at Vancouver. There is a process for protection and correction of physical plant risk. There are also supervisor based human factor risk indicators in the operations testing process. Human factor risk identification is an area in which craft employees are apprehensive about participation. As Shared Values grows and trust develops there is an opportunity for increased employee involvement for human factor risk identification and analysis. As Vancouver develops its risk identification and elimination processes it will grow closer to the coveted injury free workplace.

Empowerment

Empowerment is critical to the success of safety process in any operation. At Vancouver terminal empowerment was widely understood by both craft and supervisors. Craft employees stated that they would feel comfortable empowering themselves when in an unsafe condition. Supervisors of all levels pledged support of empowerment. Empowerment seems to be healthy at Vancouver terminal.

Confidence in the Site Safety Process

Employees interviewed had many favorable comments regarding relationships with local supervisors indicating that trust and credibility are being built. The overall feeling of trust and credibility between craft and supervisors was inconsistent. Many supervisors are viewed with a high level of trust while other supervisors are viewed as adversarial. There were several incidents of employees on a train for around 20 hours. Though these incidents are few, employees are very concerned that their safety is not held in the highest regard if they are expected to work these long hours. When incidents such as these occur the repercussions in terms of trust in management's concern for safety are widespread. Due to recent events to the time of the assessment many employees were still very passionate about the incidents. These incidents of grossly exceeding hours of service damaged confidence in the system. It should be noted that there is no historic pattern of employees on duty for extreme long periods of time.

Employee Participation in the Safety Process

Employee participation in the site safety process is on the rise. It is continuing to increase and does not show signs of slowing. Employees feel a part of the process. They understand that these processes are for their use, but are not always clear about the purpose or how to use all facets of the safety process.

Safety Goals and Objectives

All supervisors and employees interviewed understood what and where their past accident and injury experience occurred. They were proud of the history of long injury free streaks in the Vancouver terminal. When asked how they could support division goals for safety most employees responded that they must follow the rules and turn in unsafe conditions. Supervisors felt that they should work to mitigate unsafe conditions turned in by employees, due a thorough job with operations testing, and communicate openly with employees. Improved communication was mentioned by several supervisors and developing processes for safety communications is included in some of the supervisors PMP goals for 2005.

Unsafe Conditions (Environmental and Physical Plant Conditions)

The terminal has done an excellent job through the SIRP log and safety committee of correcting physical plant risk. However, budget concerns were mentioned repeated during craft employee interviews. The safety log was working well and there was a high level of cooperation between the local supervisors and site team craft members in protecting and correcting unsafe conditions.

New supervisors and craft employees stated that they were not trained in how to identify risks in the workplace. There was no safety training regarding risk identification, protection, or correction. Training to clarify all safety process should be ensured for all employees and supervisors.

Human Factors

There was no indication that the site safety team has a proactive process to identify and mitigate human factors risk. The safety committee does hold marathons to educate crews regarding accidents and injuries that had human factor causes. There were indications that employees are concerned about human factors because fatigue as it relates to line-ups was the most commonly cited safety concern.

Workplace Risk Analysis

Supervisors and employees had a varying understanding of how workplace risks have a direct effect on the likelihood of future accidents taking place. Some supervisors could articulate clearly a link between risk and injury experience and others had little understanding of the relationship.

The safety committee is not fully utilizing the Closed Loop Safety Process. It is not apparent that they understand the importance of following all of the steps of the CLSP, therefore the process has the potential to suffer and allow risk to continue.

Risk Solutions

Selection of risk solutions centers on the correction of physical plant issues as a part of the SIRP. The site safety committee has demonstrated that they are an important resource for solution development. The site safety committee should be encouraged to not only participate in solution development for physical plant risk but also for human factor risk. It should also be noted that two front line supervisors are exploring communication processes which may play part in risk solution activities.

Measurement for Results

Vancouver is proud of their 440+ day injury free streak. Measurement to determine safety progress is mainly done through tracking injury-free days.

The safety team also said they track how expeditiously SIRP safety issues are corrected. They felt this gave them insight into the level of commitment by local management in preventing accidents and injuries.

Safety Communication

Safety communication consists of Job Safety Briefings, Marathon Safety Meetings, Supervisor Contact Meetings, a yearly employee review and Safety Bulletin Boards. Further processes are being explored by front line supervision.

Job Safety Briefings are not routinely conducted for road TY&E employees. Yardmasters and trainmasters hold briefings when they are conducted. Train crews stated they self brief at intermediate times during their trip or shift as the situation requires. For the Engineering and Mechanical crafts job safety briefings are conducted on a regular basis.

Marathon meetings are held to discuss larger safety issues such as rules changes/modifications, serious injuries and division performance and safety processes.

Marathons, job safety briefings and employee initiated safety contacts with their supervisors are used to reinforce safety topics such as new rules, rules changes, unsafe conditions, and recognition.

Safety bulletin boards are used to post information regarding local unsafe conditions as well as system notices and information.

Understanding of the Closed-Loop Safety Process

Most employees could not articulate the Closed Loop Safety Process. When asked to explain the process for addressing risk most employees said that they could tell a trainmaster or turn in a “pink sheet” into the SIRP. Due to the fact that most risk identified in Vancouver was physical plant risk the CLSP is used mostly in the context of the SIRP. Craft employees could explain that if they turn in an unsafe condition to the SIRP process that the issues would typically be fixed. However, not everyone was clear about the communication process involved with the SIRP. There was also some confusion regarding how much input they could have into the problem solving, implementation, and measurement steps.

Employees identified as many human factors risks during the assessment as concerns as they mentioned physical plant risk.

Recognition

Recognition is given for injury-free work performance. Occasionally recognition is given for recognizing workplace risk in terms for example finding a broken rail. Further emphasis should be placed on recognizing workplace risk reduction targets. Many employees interviewed stated they would like to see an increased level of supervisor one-on-one recognition for a job well done.

Safety Responsibility

Employees felt responsible for their own safety and the safety of their coworkers. Employees understand that they must protect and correct when necessary. They reinforced the importance of following the rules and looking out for one another.

Supervisors felt that their responsibility was to address unsafe conditions reports and to properly conduct operations tests in order to identify unsafe work practices.

Shared Safety Activities

Each group seems to have a clear view of what they need to do to support the local safety process. Most employees understand their role in the SIRP, rules compliance, operations testing, marathons, job safety briefings, supervisor safety contacts, and employee review process. As will be explained in the recommendations portion of this assessment, the Vancouver staff has demonstrated a high level of competence with the safety processes in place and is ready to for additional activities to support the Shared Values and the Closed Loop Safety Process.

Recommendations:

Clear and Common Direction in Safety

Vancouver has demonstrated a high level of commitment to safety. Both employees and supervisors have demonstrated through their words and actions a commitment of lowering risk in the environment. The safety committee in Vancouver has developed into a highly motivated and well functioning team. There is a plan in place to identify and mitigate physical plant risk. The plan should be expanded to include all types of risk.

Processes to address other human factor related issues is management based. Local supervisors identify human behavior best practice and risk through the operations testing process. Many craft employees cited fatigue as their primary safety concern. Craft employees have identified human factor risk and are comfortable sharing those identified risks with our assessment team. Process should be developed allow craft employees to identify human factor risk and follow the steps of the Closed Loop Safety Process to mitigate that risk.

Forums to address risk and non safety related issues that could affect morale have been established at Vancouver. Most crafts as well as management attend the safety committee meeting therefore risk analysis, problem solving, and implementation will be possible with possible with a diverse knowledge base.

1. Identification of the highest potential workplace risks within the Vancouver working jurisdiction.
 - a. Workplace risks should include:
 - i. Environmental Conditions
 - ii. Physical Plant Conditions
 - iii. Work Procedures
 - iv. At-Risk Work Practices
 - b. Identify the types and specific categories of risk within each work group
 - c. Determine what the course of action to eliminate or reduce the risks within each identified risk group
 - d. Select who will implement the agreed to actions on a specific timeline
 - e. Jointly measure the actions or activities for results
 - f. Determine most effective form of feedback and provide feedback to all affected craft employees
 - i. Discuss the output of the safety committee meeting with all affected employees through Job Safety Briefings (Supervisors and site safety team members should join together in delivering output)
 1. Ask for suggestions
 2. Be willing to adjust workplace risk targets

3. Explain to craft employees that it is important to have everyone who performs work to have direct input into identifying workplace risks
 - ii. Employees should be aware and understand the nature of the workplace risks in their work area
- g. Evidence of success: Supervisors, union local chairmen, site safety team members and craft employees all understand, accept and commit to a common course of action in safety.

Empowerment and Responsibility for Safety

Most craft employees interviewed expressed a high level of trust and credibility between the supervisors and themselves in relation to the issue of empowerment. They understood the supervisors had an operation to manage but were confident that they also looked out for their safety and well being and that when it comes to issues of empowerment, they would be supported by management.

Most employees interviewed agreed that the responsibility for safety resided with each and every person. Supervisors and employees alike must take responsibility to create an environment as free of workplace risks as possible.

Employees were passionate that they had a responsibility to one another to ensure each other's safety. There were concerns expressed by senior employees for new employees. The senior employees felt a deep sense of concern and responsibility for the safety of new employees.

Empowerment is being used and accepted by employees at Vancouver. In fact, it was so strong that no one interviewed hesitated in expressing their support or feeling that local supervision would back them up if they empowered themselves. Empowerment is strong at Vancouver and the recommendation is to continue to support and encourage the use of empowerment in areas of high risk.

Safety Issue Resolution Process

There was much discussion among site team members and craft employees concerning the effectiveness of the Safety Issue Resolution Process (SIRP). Several employees stated that if they used the "Pink sheets" rather than simply telling a supervisor of an issue, the outcome would be faster and more effective. Employees who have used the SIRP feel confident in the process. Some employees prefer to turn issues into supervisors verbally. Supervisors should commit to entering issues into the SIRP even if they are not turned in on a pink sheet. Verbal notification of risk is enough to warrant a log in the SIRP.

After an issue has been logged it is important to continually communicate with the employee who brought the attention to management's attention. Vancouver has been very successful with the letter mailings for communication. Though letters should

continue, it is critical that craft employees be communicated with throughout the SIRP process. When the employee turns in the unsafe concern, the reporting supervisor should solicit suggestions for correction of the risk. When the solution has been implemented the supervisor should ensure that the reporting craft employee reviews the fix and agrees that the risk has been mitigated to an acceptable level. Continually soliciting input from craft employees into all steps of the SIRP process will enhance the CLSP by providing additional knowledge and input to the problem solving and implementation process.

We need to be very open with employees that some issues are very complex and may take time to correct. Some issues may not be correctable due to economic issues. Also, some issues are inherent to the railroad industry such as available for call, working 24/7, day/night, heat/cold stress issues, lifting carrying issues and so forth. Supervisors should continue to reinforce the consistent application of the protection and correction protocol.

Site Safety Team Accident & Injury Prevention Process

Vancouver site safety team is primarily focusing on physical plant issues. The safety committee also reviews rules changes to determine if the change is going to be significant enough to present a higher level of risk and then they conduct a marathon to ensure that all employees understand the procedure.

Risk-based safety training should be offered to the site safety team to provide them the skills to identify all types of workplace risk including human factors. Also they need training to analyze those risks and determine the most effective course of action to eliminate or reduce those risks. They need to know how to develop an implementation plan and execute it. Further, instruction on how to measure for results. The site team should know if their applied risk solutions are getting the results that they expected. And, finally, the best methods to provide risk performance feedback to all affected employees.

Training can be conducted within a site team meeting day and prepare them to balance all types of risk in their accident and injury prevention efforts.

Recognition

Presently, the Vancouver safety process recognizes long standing injury-free work performance and occasionally recognition for identification of risk.

In a safety process that focuses on all types of workplace risk human factors risk reductions should be recognized as well.

As risk information is developed by the site safety team, risk targets are established to provide performance goals that the group feels is acceptable. When risk solutions are selected and implemented and risk targets are achieved then recognition should be awarded to both supervisors and employees.

The type and frequency of recognition will be decided by the site safety team and is part of the roles and responsibilities of the balanced site team. Local supervisors are part to the site teams.

Shared Safety Activities

Shared Safety activities will be expanded as site teams are trained and further manage activities in risk identification, analysis, risk solutions, implementation, measurement, employee feedback and recognition.